

HOW TO MAKE STONES WEEP: a ? reading of Jalal Toufic



While some of what was thought impossible, for example, interaction-free measurement, turned out, thanks to quantum mechanics, not to be so, what one thought possible, human life, is really impossible¹: “Human life is impossible. But it is only affliction which makes us feel this” (Simone Weil, *Gravity & Grace*). The “contemporary” Lebanese, who underwent a protracted civil-war and two Israeli invasions in the latter part of the Twentieth Century, should be aware of this better than many other peoples. Unfortunately, with rare exceptions, even though the vast majority of the Lebanese discovered in affliction that life is impossible, they then limited this impossibility cheaply, “realistically,” to the period of affliction, considering human life impossible during affliction, rather than coming to the realization that affliction does not make human life impossible but merely reveals that it is impossible, always—🪨 ‘there is crime only where there is a gaze’ 🪨 There has to be a necessity, in philosophy and elsewhere, just as a filmmaker doesn’t just say, ‘Hey, I’m going to make this film!’ There has to be a necessity, otherwise there is nothing at all. [A creator is not a preacher working for the fun of it. A creator only does what he or she absolutely needs to do]”); 🪨 If “Truth lies not in one dream, but in many dreams,” this can be because life is a “dream within a dream” (Ibn al-‘Arabī), 🪨 Who is the damned? Is it the one who is confronted with a choice both of whose alternatives would damn him? It is worse than that; he is the one who would be damned whether he acquiesces to choosing between these two damning options or refuses to choose between them. Of the damned, it is accurate indeed to say: damned if you do and damned if you don’t. 🪨 The other can never die in my place (Heidegger: “Dying ... is essentially mine in such a way that no one can be my representative”²⁹), but, unless I am a yoga or Sufi or Zen master, he or she “always” “robs” me of my place (in “his” dying before dying [“This autumn, as lightly clad as possible, I twice attended my funeral, first as Count Robilant (no, he is my son, insofar as I am Carlo Alberto, my nature below), but I was Antonelli myself”], Nietzsche writes: “I am Prado, I am also Prado’s father, I venture to say that I am also Lesseps.... I am also Chambige ... every name in history is I”³⁰). 🪨 And I fell into a river, once, trying to leap from one stone to another.” 🪨 “I love your feet ... your ankles ... your knees ... your thighs ... your buttocks ... your breasts ... your nipples ... your shoulders ... your arms ... your neck ... your hair ... your face ... *and* your mouth ... your eyes ... your nose ... your ears ... your saliva ... your blood ... your urine ... and the fluid you expel from the urinary bladder or from the paraurethral glands during orgasm.” 🪨 Fiction makes it possible for us to perceive what otherwise we could not access, for example, other branches of the multiverse, 🪨 Haven’t I written: “He left (did he leave?) Beirut—a city where ‘nothing [is] left, not even leaving’—to New York in 1984”’? Even if I never go back to Beirut, my coordinates are conjointly the city in which I happen to reside and Beirut. 🪨 “Am I dead?” 🪨 the experience of initially reading the text without understanding any of it, feeling that it is written in a foreign language one has never learned, and then rereading it and finding it luminously clear. 🪨 Where is the rest of the world? What is the world doing? How is the world allowing such atrocities not only to happen but also to go on being perpetuated for months and years? 🪨 “Silence goes faster backwards. Three times. Silence goes faster backwards. Three times. I repeat. Silence goes faster backwards. Three times. Your attention, please. 🪨 photographs taken by nobody—🪨 I am not a revengeful person. 🪨 Was photography invented not so much to assuage some urge to arrest the moment, but partly owing to an intuition that it already existed in the universe, in the form of the immobilization and flattening at the event horizon? 🪨 She felt anxious that they were not seeing her, and that that was because she no longer existed.

🪨 Gaza as We Have Never Seen It Before, November 2023 —And Yet I Recall Having Written on Some of these Matters Before 🪨

,which is not experimental but conceptual, 🪨 As monads, enfolding the same world, at the most basic level *we are always only in our own company*.²⁴³ 🪨 Why did he time-travel? He did it to find in the multiverse the branch in which all the lies his beloved told him are truths. 🪨 Qur’an 27:90: “You see the mountains—you think them firm, yet they move like clouds.” 🪨 The fourth entry in Malte’s notebooks begins with: “I am learning to see.” And the following entry begins with, “Have I said it before? I am learning to see,” 🪨 “People who walk down stairs⁵ without looking and yet do not fall (for instance, the old Lord Hidetora whom the enormity of the disasters that have befallen him puts in a trance as he walks down the steps in Kurosawa’s *Ran*), or move around while conversing without looking at each other and yet do not bump into each other, trip for no apparent reason on smooth spaces. These trips are the sign that a threshold has been reached. 🪨 This film is to be watched in an apartment giving onto other apartments. 🪨 The mind has to leap from one event to the other as one leaps from stone to stone in crossing a river. It may happen that one’s foot hesitates between two rocks, or that one misses one’s footing and slips. The mind does likewise. Actually it is not of the essence of a stone to allow people to cross rivers without wetting their feet ...”²² 🪨 I am not a revengeful person. 🪨 for she was presently feeling hypersensitive to sounds. 🪨 But art and writing (and real emancipatory politics) do not give voice to the voiceless;¹⁰⁷ rather, they interrupt even the inner voice of the “voiceless,” whether by suspending the interior monologue of the reader or spectator (or advocate of a political movement), or by trying, often unsuccessfully, to silence the voices-over that forcibly impose themselves in the mind of the one who, whether schizophrenic or dead, has become voiceless, anxiously wanting to scream but unable to do so. 🪨 His response was: “They have eyes, but do not see.” 🪨 **Are You Sure I Saw It?** 🪨 “The time of a prayer.” A valid, successful prayer is conjointly an imploration for the injection of time, therefore for the possibility of the new where there was “only” “repetition,” *and* the answer to this imploration, the time that one asked for. In other words: “For the time being a prayer.”⁵ In this sense, a genuine Muslim does not repeat his prayer five times a day, but with each prayer injects time to get out of repetition. 🪨 While the world hides the disaster by continuing in its course, the disaster too, in its manner, hides the world. 🪨 Lebanon, which due to the long civil war and the invasions it suffered as well as for other reasons has a significant number of artists and writers abroad, is a privileged site for thinking the community in general and the artistic and literary community in specific, for the latter is formed basically not through its members’ exposure to and consequent discussion of each other’s works (which produces fashions) but through this concordance around anomalous subjects, figures, spaces and architectures, etc., by artists, thinkers, writers, and film and video makers who do not know each other, revealing these anomalies as symptoms of the culture with which they are dealing. 🪨,which means we are increasingly turning blind to the immediate environment, 🪨 But if there is something that does not need a catalyst in order to continue, it is life, for *life goes on*. 🪨 Gilles Deleuze, writing on Bergson: “You can bring two instants or two positions together to infinity, but movement will always occur in the interval between the two, in other words behind your back.”¹³⁴ 🪨 One should speak solely when also speaking to oneself. Only then is there a dialogue. 🪨 Lebanon. Nothing left, not even leaving. 🪨 On the subway train, a father is teaching his child: “Parallel lines meet at infinity.” Two parallel tracks converge. The child: “Is this infinity?” 🪨 “films that beget films,” have also produced films that resurrect films. 🪨 More important than thought and poetry and art is thought-provoking thought.



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*The selected exarpts are referenced based on my encounters with the books of Jalal Toufi. They exist in others of his texts as well.

